

EXAMINERER TIPS for IGCSE History 0470

Good revision is not just learning your history but also how you use it to get the best grade you can.

General advice

Preparing to get a good grade begins as soon as you start your IGCSE course. You can prepare by:

- finding out what you need to know.
- organising your notes. Make a list of the topics studied under the headings 'Core content' and 'Depth or Nineteenth/Twentieth Century Studies'.
- knowing how your IGCSE papers are structured and practising past questions.

Your notes

- Download a copy of the Revision Checklist from the 'Cambridge Students' website and read through it. Be really clear what topics you need to know then check that your notes are complete and make sense. If you need further advice, speak to your teacher who will have a full copy of the Syllabus.
- Ask your teacher if you can have a copy of a summary of the syllabus. Be really clear what topics you need to know, then check that your notes are complete and make sense.
- Whilst there is a choice of questions on Papers 1, 2 and 4 there are compulsory sections from which you have to choose questions so you can't afford to have gaps in your notes.
- Try to produce an accurate set of notes when you do the work in the first place, but if you need to improve your notes you could:
 - ask a friend if you can copy up work which you have missed from them – but make sure you understand it,
 - find more information on topics you have studied, using your textbook(s), the library or the Internet. For it to be useful make sure that you fully understand it – if not ask your teacher,
 - buy a good revision guide - there should be lots available in the bookshops.

Learning the work

There are lots of different ways to revise. Some people make lists; other people use diagrams and pictures. Once you know what topics to cover, you have to work out the best way to learn them.

- Make a revision timetable and plan your revision carefully so that you have time to fit in everything you need to cover.
- Try to work in short concentrated spells and then have a break rather than trying to work continuously. Avoid being interrupted – don't answer the phone/read the text message/have a look at the TV – save it for your planned break.

Do not sit looking at your notes, or just copy them out. Try to do something active, for example you could:

- draw brainstorming mind maps, including detailed labels, highlighting the most important ones using colours,
- draw tables and charts to learn key ideas about the topic such as the causes and effects, and successes and failures which you need to learn,
- draw time lines which help you pick out how things change and explain the reasons for the changes,
- use small cards to list the main points which you need to learn,
- use colours or highlighter pens to classify items in your notes e.g. causes/effects, long/short term effects, successes/failures, etc,
- ask your teacher for past papers and/or questions and test yourself. Look at as many past papers as possible. This is not for you to predict questions but to find out what sort of question is asked. Sometimes it is useful to practise writing out the answers in test conditions,
- if your teacher hasn't explained to you how the exams are marked, ask about it. Ask if you can see questions and their mark schemes from previous examinations. Look particularly at those answers which are worth a lot of marks to discover how you can earn more marks by giving details and examples.

Answering the questions in the examination

- Make sure you use your time carefully. For example in Paper 1 there are 3 questions to answer in 120 minutes, that is 40 minutes per question, but remember that includes time reading, thinking, choosing and planning as well as writing. It is no good writing a page if the question is only worth 5 marks; an answer worth 5 marks should take about 10 minutes to write. If you spend too long on questions which are not worth many marks it could mean you don't have enough time to answer properly the questions which are worth 8 marks. If you do finish with time to spare re-read and check your answers adding more facts and ideas if you can remember them.
- Answer the questions in order of how confident you are – leave the one you are not confident about until last.
- Write the number of the questions which you choose on the front cover of your answer booklet; there may be a grid for you to fill in. Then make sure that you number all the questions carefully in the left hand margin as you answer them.
- Look at the number of marks available for each part of a question. Ensure you spend an appropriate amount of time on each question in relation to the marks indicated. Don't spend too long on a question that has only a few marks available, or alternatively write only a very short answer when a question is worth more marks. Timing is important, don't spend too much time on your first chosen question, otherwise you will have to rush the last question. Just in case you run out of time, if there is a question which you are not confident on, answer it last.
- Ensure you read the information given in the stem of the question or any source material carefully as well as the questions themselves.
- Where you have to complete a supplementary answer sheet make sure that you put your name on it and attach it to your answer booklet.

Paper 1 tips

- Study the instructions on the front of the paper. You have to choose 3 out of the 25 questions set (2 from Section A and 1 from Section B). DON'T try to answer all the questions; you will not have time to answer them properly AND you won't be awarded any more marks for answering more than 3 questions.
- Read the questions with care. When you answer questions on the paper think very carefully. Try to learn how to respond to command words such as DESCRIBE, EXPLAIN, WHAT, WHY and HOW FAR. It is important that you answer the question as set and do not fall into the trap of just writing down everything you know.
- If you are asked to explain '*how far do you agree*' you should attempt to explain the ways in which you agree AND the ways you disagree with the point of the question in order to score near maximum marks.
- Try to be as precise as possible as vague statements are unlikely to get you many marks. e.g. '*The Bolsheviks won the Civil War because of Trotsky*' is too vague to achieve more than a level 2 mark. You need to explain the importance of Trotsky to the winning of the Civil War such as '*Trotsky enforced strict discipline and used both encouragement and terror to make soldiers fight. He was a courageous and outstanding leader.*' This kind of answer will ensure a higher level mark.

Paper 2 tips

- This paper is testing different skills, using source evaluation. It is NOT a comprehension paper – it is a skills paper – and you MUST use your own knowledge (i.e. examples) where indicated, when evaluating the evidence to achieve the highest marks. When you read the sources you must be checking them against that which you know – does it tell you something new, something you know to be right, something you know to be wrong? Do any other sources on the paper give the same information - i.e. cross-references?
- Look at the instructions on the front of the paper. You have to answer ALL 6 questions from EITHER the twentieth century OR nineteenth century topics. You must NOT answer some questions from one section and some from the other one.
- When you answer questions on the paper think very carefully. Try to learn how to respond to key words in the questions such as RELIABLE, USEFUL and HOW FAR. When you are asked to use a written resource you will gain little credit for copying out sections from it. Look at the question which is set and try to show your understanding by answering it in your own words.

- Again try to be accurate and precise in your answers, especially to Question 6 which carries with it the most marks in this paper. It asks you to explain '*how far do these sources...*' and you should attempt to explain the ways in which sources agree AND which sources disagree with the point of the question in order to score near maximum marks. Again using your own knowledge will help you gain the most marks.

Paper 4 tips

- Don't forget that this paper is an alternative to coursework. To prepare for it you need to be able to answer questions that combine the approach used in Papers 1 and 2.
- Look at the instructions on the front of the paper. You have to choose 1 out of the 8 questions. DO NOT try to answer all the questions; you will not have time to answer them properly AND you won't be awarded any more marks for answering more than 1 question. Ensure that you answer ALL parts of the question that you choose.
- Each question has a part (a) and a part (b). Questions set in part (a) are designed to test your ability to use source evaluation as in Paper 2 and questions set in part (b) are based on your ability to recall knowledge of the subject content being questioned as in Paper 1. Therefore the command/key words identified above for Papers 1 and 2 should also be understood for Paper 4.

'How far' questions are used in this paper for both the source evaluation AND knowledge based questions, so you must combine the skills you have used in Papers 1 and 2 to answer these questions in this paper.